



Congressman Rubén Hinojosa

Health Issues Report

15th Congressional District - Texas

Summer 2003

Dear Friends:

The 15th Congressional District is fortunate to have a diverse population and culture. However, such diversity can present healthcare challenges that can only be overcome with dedication, persistence and attention to the needs of each community. In the first few months of the 108th Congress, I have worked hard to address the various healthcare needs of the people of South Texas.

This month, Congress will again start debating prescription drug benefit proposals for our nation's seniors. This is long overdue. Last year I opposed a plan that would have forced seniors to leave the Medicare program and join private managed care plans in order to receive this critical benefit. American seniors deserve a meaningful, common sense prescription drug benefit under Medicare that is available to all at an affordable cost, and I am working hard to achieve that goal.

Through federal funding awards, legislation and community projects, I have also worked to secure healthcare solutions for our veterans, migrant families, children, those living with diabetes, and for South Texans in general. There has been much support and assistance from our communities. I hope that you will review the accomplishments and initiatives outlined in this newsletter with pride and with the knowledge that this is only the beginning of a healthier South Texas.

Please continue to follow the progress of these healthcare initiatives on my website, www.house.gov/hinojosa.

Sincerely,

Rubén Hinojosa

Congressman Hinojosa (pictured below) speaks at the ribbon-cutting for the new Driscoll Children's Specialty Center in McAllen, Texas. Hinojosa secured \$4,000,000 for the construction of the pediatric outpatient center, which will extend the most specialized and complex medical care exclusively to children and will service children from the Rio Grande Valley including McAllen and neighboring communities.



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Congressman Hinojosa Addresses Veterans' Healthcare with VA Secretary Principi

Congressman Rubén Hinojosa and U.S. Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony J. Principi met with South Texas Veterans on Tuesday, March 25, 2003 in McAllen, Texas and Washington, DC through a new 2-way video teleconference system Hinojosa installed to bring national leaders to South Texas residents. Topics discussed included the creation of a Veterans Super Clinic in South Texas, health care services, the status of funds earmarked to Texas for the creation of a veterans cemetery and nursing home in Hidalgo County, and a possible visit to South Texas by the Secretary later in the year. In the nearly two-hour meeting, veterans were able to directly question the Secretary and voice their concerns.

Secretary Principi stated that the Veterans Administration (VA) recognized its

failure in providing effective service to American veterans. He noted that the 1998 Veterans Millennium Health Act expanded the number of veterans eligible for VA health care services from 3 million to 28 million, but VA resources have not kept up with that increasing demand. In addition, Secretary Principi said that internal migration of our nation's population has also strained the VA's ability to address the health care needs of veterans in various regions of the country.

The VA has confirmed that the State Veterans Cemetery in Mission and the Veterans Home in McAllen are on track. A grant announcement for the Veterans Home is anticipated later this summer. The VA will also work to increase veterans health care services in South Texas through collaborative contracts with health care providers in the

region. These new contracted services in area hospitals should reduce the need for veterans to travel outside South Texas to seek medical attention.

At Hinojosa's invitation, Secretary Principi has committed to coming to South Texas in the weeks ahead. Congressman Hinojosa will announce the dates of this visit in the near future.



Congressman Hinojosa brought together, in his McAllen district office, South Texas Veterans and area representatives in a video teleconference meeting with VA Secretary Principi. Participants included: Hidalgo County Judge Ramon Garcia, Rick Ramirez, Evaristo Flores, Homer Gallegos, John Najera, Patsy Palmquist, Antonio Muniz, Frank Plummer, Derly Guajardo.

STAY IN TOUCH!!!

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Congressman Hinojosa meets with Diana Ramirez, Area Director for the American Diabetes Association (ADA); Dr. Victor Gonzalez, Member of the National ADA Advisory Board; and local ADA Advisory Board members Dr. Monzar Yazji, Dr. Enrique Griego, Dr. Marcel Twahirwa, and Dr. Emir Elsayed to discuss diabetes challenges and solutions in the Rio Grande Valley.

Congressman Hinojosa Confronts Problem of Diabetes

Diabetes is a serious health problem that disproportionately affects Hispanics. More than a million Texans, both children and adults, suffer from diabetes, and an additional 500,000 have the disease and do not know it. Unfortunately, Hispanics are twice as likely to have diabetes as non-Hispanic whites. There were over 50,000 diagnosed cases of diabetes in the 15th Congressional District in 2001.

The good news is that there is much that can be done to combat this growing epidemic. Early diagnosis and active management are key to reducing the serious health complications that make diabetes deadly. I am committed to making sure that educational programs, screening services, and management options are more accessible to all Americans. Specifically, I am working on legislation that addresses diabetes occurring during pregnancy and disease management challenges for school-aged children.

Congressman Hinojosa - Securing Funding for Healthcare Initiatives in South Texas

MIGRANT HEALTH

- Congressman Hinojosa recently announced a federal funding award of \$500,000 for a project to train health care workers on the special needs of migrant workers and their families. A joint teaching partnership between South Texas Community College



Congressman Hinojosa meets in Beeville with Jeannie Hodgkiss, Executive Director of OATH; Don Clark, OATH Board President, and David Wagner, Administrator, Cristus Spohn Hospital to discuss federal grant funding for low-income prescription drug coverage.

and Georgetown University in Washington, DC will establish "Milagros," the National Center of Excellence in Migrant Health, and develop a specialized certification-training program for migrant health care workers.

The program will serve as a national model and provide new employment opportunities in migrant health/migrant Head Start for graduates of the program in South Texas. A videoconference announcing the "Milagros" project was held on March 3, 2003 with Congressman Hinojosa; STCC President Shirley A. Reed; Dr. Mary Lou de Leon Siantz, Associate Dean of Nursing/Allied Health at Georgetown University; Dr. Ramiro R. Casso and Wanda Spratt, Founder and Dean, respectively, of the Nursing and Allied Health Center at STCC.

BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH

- The Department of Health and Human Services approved a \$627,230 Minority Biomedical Research Support (MBRS) grant to Texas A & M University – Kingsville. The primary goal of the MBRS grant program is to increase the number of minorities participating in biomedical research by increasing the pool of these individuals with a PhD in one of the biomedical sciences. Texas A & M University – Kingsville will use portions of this funding to perform research on minority health issues and concerns.

- Congressman Hinojosa secured \$91,800 for the University of Texas – Pan American in Edinburg. The grant is from the Department of Health and Human Services' National Institute of Child Health and Development and is designated for the Phase II Sponsored Research Infrastructure Program. This funding will prove instrumental in supporting biomedical research in the reproductive sciences and related issues.

NUESTRA CLINICA DEL VALLE

- Congressman Hinojosa also worked with the Department of Health and Human Services to secure \$460,261 for a new Nuestra Clinica Del Valle in Donna. This funding will support a new access point for the provision of primary health care services to the uninsured and underserved population in Hidalgo County. The ribbon-cutting ceremony is pictured below.



Job Protection for Living Organ Donors

Living organ donors risk not only their health but also their jobs by taking significant time off in order to donate an organ to save the life of a family member. These heroic individuals should be guaranteed that they can return to their jobs after such a courageous sacrifice. I recently introduced legislation, the Living Organ Donor Job Security Act, HR 1318, that will extend the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to include medical leave for living organ donors, allowing up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave for surgery, recovery and related medical services. The bill is co-sponsored by 80 of my colleagues in Congress and is endorsed by the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), the American Liver Foundation, the National Kidney Foundation, the Texas Transplantation Society and the American Diabetes Association.

In 2001, 6,534 brave individuals gave life to others through living organ donations, taking extended time off with no guarantee they could return to their jobs. In the same year, 6,729 people died while waiting for organ transplants. My bill will help the heroic donors of living organs by ensuring their jobs are protected, and thereby increase living organ donations for those desperately in need. In short, the Living Organ Donor Job Security Act will save lives.

Congressman Hinojosa's Legislative Priorities

▲ Improving Medicare/Medicaid Coverage

- Medicare Physician Protection Act (H.R. 41)
- Access to Hospitals Act (H.R. 328)
- SCHIP Allotment Extension Availability Act (H.R. 515)
- Medicare Cholesterol Screening Coverage Act (H.R. 721)
- State Budget Relief Act (H.R. 816)
- Medicare Access to Rehabilitation Services Act (H.R. 1125)
- Medicare Rx Benefit and Discount Act (H.R. 1199)
- Medicare Puerto Rico Hospital Payment Fairness Act (H.R. 1351)
- Medicare Safety Net Access Act (H.R. 1377)
- Medicare Rx Now Act (H.R. 1568)
- Quality Cancer Care Act (H.R. 1622)
- Health Care Access and Rural Equity Act (H.R. 1675)
- The American Hospital Preservation Act (H.R. 1710)
- Medicare Wellness Act (H.R. 1860)
- Medicaid Community-Based Attendant Services and Supports Act (H.R. 2032)

▲ Fighting for Progress in Diabetes

- Resolution Urging Increased Federal Funding for Juvenile (type 1) Diabetes Research (H.Con.Res. 107)
- Fair and Equitable Expenses for Treatment Act (H.R. 359)
- Improved Nutrition and Physical Activity Act (H.R. 716)
- Pancreatic Islet Cell Transplantation Act (H.R. 1068)
- Minority Populations Diabetes Prevention and Control Act (H.R. 1144)
- Diabetic Foot Amputation Prevention Act (H.R. 1295)
- Diabetes Prevention, Access, and Care Act (H.R. 1916)
- Medicare Coverage Program for Diabetes Laboratory Diagnostic Tests (H.R. 2236)



Congressman Hinojosa speaks to minority healthcare advocates at "Cover the Uninsured" event hosted by the Hispanic Caucus and other minority congressional caucuses in Washington, D.C.

This mailing was prepared, published and mailed at taxpayer expense.

▲ Taking Care Of Veterans' Health

- Prisoner of War Benefits Act (H.R. 348)
- Act to amend IRS code to allow Federal civilian and military retirees to pay health insurance premiums on a pretax basis and allow a deduction for TRICARE supplemental premiums (H.R. 1231)
- Department of Veterans Affairs Claims Backlog Reduction Act (H.R. 1264)

▲ Addressing the Healthcare Needs of Women

- Women's Autoimmune Diseases Research and Prevention Act (H.R. 370)
- Mammogram Availability Act (H.R. 736)
- Annie Fox Act (H.R. 1657)
- Breast Cancer Patient Protection Act (H.R. 1886)

▲ Improving Access to Quality Healthcare

- Local Emergency Health Services Reimbursement Act (H.R. 819)
- Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act (H.R. 953)
- Gift of Life Congressional Medal Act (H.R. 1251)
- Living Organ Donor Job Security Act (H.R. 1381)
- Taxpayers' Cancer Research Funding Act (H.R. 1692)
- America's Rx Program Act (H.R. 1694)
- Cancer Testing, Education, Screening and Treatment Act (H.R. 1868)
- Genetic Nondiscrimination in Health Insurance and Employment Act (H.R. 1910)
- Programs and Activities to Improve Health of Hispanic Individuals (H.R. 2258)

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PRSRST STD

M.C.

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